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CHILE: BACKTRACKING ON RIGHTS

President Pinochet's abrupt decision to cancel the visit of the UN Human Rights Commission is likely to damage his government's efforts to obtain badly needed credits and new foreign investment. A number of West European nations are already sour on Chile because of its abuse of human rights and its shaky economic situation and poor credit standing. Pinochet's latest action will, probably complicate Chile's attempts to renegotiate its foreign debt, on which principal payments amounting to \$490 million are due this year. The British strongly oppose renegotiation of the debt, and other creditor nations may now adopt the same attitude.

In a speech announcing the banning of the visit, Pinochet reiterated that Chile would not receive such groups unless the USSR and Cuba were likewise made subjects of investigation. His allusion to Marxist infiltration of such investigation commissions demonstrates his concern over the possibility that they might pry into internal security matters. More than anything else, Pinochet's sharp words about the international Marxist campaign directed against Chile

probably reflect his annoyance with recent resolutions by the International Labor Organization in Geneva and the International Women's Conference in Mexico City, both of which harshly condemned the military government.

Reports that the UN group had already interviewed Chilean exiles probably heightened the Chilean leader's fears over the prospect of yet another rebuke by an international organization. At the time of the announcement, the UN ad hoc working group was gathering testimony from exiles in Lima; it had already accumulated material in Paris, New York, and Mexico. The commission intends to complete its report for Secretary General Waldheim even if it cannot make a fact-finding mission to Chile.

Pinochet evidently opposed from the start any offer to invite independent observers to Chile to study alleged violations of human rights. Favorable responses to earlier overtures probably can be attributed solely to efforts by those junta advisers who want to improve the country's international image.

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The government's nervousness over reported plans by communist and other political opponents to step up labor and peasant agitation may also have played a part in Pinochet's decision. The press claimed recently that the outlawed Communist Party had instructed militants to take asylum in foreign embassies so as to embarrass the government during the UN group's visit.

The President's decision to adopt a hard line on the human rights issue will make it increasingly difficult for Chile to obtain financial and military aid. If such aid is not forthcoming, mounting economic troubles and the unfavorable balance in military hardware vis-a-vis Peru-Chile's principal adversary-could cause discord within the junta, especially if Pinochet is unable to produce solutions. His failure to consult other junta members on key decisions has already caused some friction, and unless the situation improves there may be a gradual erosion of unity within the military over the longer run.



President Pinochet

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